



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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The starting point for the implementation of EQIP activity is the locally led conservation process, beginning with the USDA Local Work Group (LWG). This group consists of local governmental agencies that determine the resource needs and concerns in their area based on input from a wide range of partner entities. The Local Work Groups were asked to consider the 5 major resource concerns that have been identified in Colorado when developing their recommendations. These concerns were Non-Point Source Reduction-Animal Waste Management, Grazing Lands, Reduction in Soil Erosion on Cropland, Wildlife, Forestry, and Non-Point Source Reduction-Water Quality/Quantity. The LWG's were convened by USDA in cooperation with local Conservation Districts. The LWG's determined the resource concerns in their area and proposed ranking criteria to help address these concerns.

Input from the Local Work Groups was provided to the appropriate Watershed Work Group (WWG). The WWG was convened by the Association of Conservation Districts watershed president, and the group consisted of members from local Conservation Districts, partner agencies, and agricultural, environmental, and wildlife groups. Based on LWG input, the WWG determined the resource concerns for that watershed and made recommendations to NRCS regarding the percent of funds to go to each issue, ranking criteria, eligible practices, cost share rates, etc. Ranking criteria were developed by NRCS technical teams. Also developed were "Screening" criteria. The purpose of the screening process is to place applicants in High, Medium, and Low priority classes. This allows planning to concentrate on those applications most likely to be funded first.

Utilizing the input from these WWG's, the NRCS State Conservationist made recommendations for resource concerns funding, ranking criteria, and allocation of funds to each concern, as well as cost share rates and the percent of the total state allocations for each watershed. These recommendations were presented to the State Technical Committee for comment. The State Technical Committee is convened by NRCS and consists of partner agencies as well as other interested stakeholders. Based on the input from this Group, and giving each watershed one more chance for comment, the State Conservationist made the final determination on each item for each watershed. The allocation of funds to each watershed was determined by NRCS based on the percentage of the identified 5 major resource concerns that was in each watershed. These percentages were based on resource data and the workload analysis conducted by NRCS.

In addition to the general EQIP process, Colorado also receives funds in 3 watersheds earmarked for salinity control work. These watersheds are the Gunnison-Dolores, Colorado River and San Juan Basin watersheds. The Watershed Work Groups for those watersheds also recommended screening tools and ranking criteria for contracts to be funded under the salinity control concern.

Colorado also receives funds through the Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) component of EQIP. These funds are available for sign-up in areas of the State that can achieve a documented net savings in water used. In fiscal year 2006 funds are again available in the High Plains Aquifer, or that area generally known as the Ogallala Aquifer in Colorado. This area is in part of 3 of the watersheds, the Lower South Platte, Republican and the Lower Arkansas.

It includes all or parts of Sedgwick, Logan, Phillips, Washington, Yuma, Lincoln, Kit Carson, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Prowers and Baca counties. In FY 2006 Colorado will continue to make GSWC funding available in two areas outside the High Plains aquifer. The Rio Grande Watershed project covers all irrigated acres within the watershed boundaries and is targeted at reducing consumptive use of ground water resources. The Lower South Platte Watershed project includes the irrigated cropland acres in the South Platte river basin in Logan, Sedgwick, Morgan and Washington counties. A special Work Group of representatives was convened and recommendations were made to NRCS on ranking criteria, cost share rates and conservation practices eligible for use in each project area.

All proposed actions for both the salinity funds as well as the GSWC funds were presented to the State Technical Committee for input. The State Conservationist again made the final determination on how to address the ranking, funding, etc., for these concerns.